

Meeting Notes
Tenant Work Group
Tuesday, May 26, 2009
6:30-8:30pm
Executive Conference Room
101 Monroe Street
Rockville, MD 20850

Work Group Members in attendance: Matt Losak (Chair), Guy Johnson, Rick Nelson, Dale Tibbitts, Felicia Eberling

Via Conference Call: Shaun Pharr, Alice Wilkerson, Maureen Ross

Staff participants: Megan Moriarty, IMPACT Silver Spring; Debbie Spielberg, County Council; Patrice Cheatham, DHCA

Agenda

- Review and approve notes
- Update on survey
- Website comments
- Committee work plan reports
- Final report discussion 1
- Other business
- Public Comment

Notes:

Matt Losak called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

Alice Wilkerson led a review of the suggested survey questions. The group agreed to change the language of the following questions: 3, 5, 10, 12, 14, 15 and 18a. The group adopted the changes as discussed and Alice will forward the final wording to the contractor.

Shaun Pharr suggested changing "landlord" to "housing provider" on the survey, but the group decided not to adopt that change because residents filling out the survey may not be familiar with that term.

The two previous meeting minutes were reviewed and approved with two changes. Debbie Spielberg suggested and the group agreed to an edit in the May 12th notes: in the fourth paragraph, second sentence, delete "the group feels" and replace with "it was suggested". Megan will add Debbie and Dale as attendees to the notes from the May 5th public meeting.

Discussing work plans

Committee 1: Tenant Security and Affordability

Guy reported the committee does not have a formal update, but that the committee plans to have something substantial to present at the next meeting.

Committee 2: Code Update and Enforcement

Debbie handed out an updated copy of the committee's draft findings and recommendations. A question remains about what the OLTA process is for dealing with excessive rent increases. Rick clarified this process is not codified, but at the discretion of the investigator. Rick said he and his staff can sit down with Debbie and other committee members to answer most of the outstanding questions.

Dale asked if DHCA receives copies of all lease renewal letters. No, but starting this year DHCA is gathering information for the Annual Rental Survey that captures average rent increases by apartment size, for each apartment community (90% response rate). Dale would like to see a database that has exact information for rent increases for all apartments in the County. Rick thinks the new data DHCA is gathering from landlords, once compiled, will give the County more information to be able to address excessive rent increases.

The group also discussed whether or not the County provides information on how to form and manage a tenant association. Debbie has not found any information in her searches. Some members suggested that a new tenant advocacy group could offer that basic information in addition to providing on-going support to tenant groups. Rick suggested that the group include in the recommendations what kind of research still needs to be done - For example, research that the group identified, but could not complete, like best practices for tenant associations. Debbie reported that another major issue she has found is on the issue of condo conversions and it appears tenants have no one place to go for individual support and current documents are confusing. Rick made a suggested recommendation: have clearer language/documents about condo conversions available.

Rent stabilization - Rick - two issues - people that can't pay the rent at any price and the affordability issue.

No reports were given by Committees 3 or 4.

The group reviewed the one web comment about meetings between landlords/managers and tenants; committees 2 and 3 will take it under advisement.

The work group set the next two meeting dates. Each committee will submit a draft report via email by June 8 for discussion at the next meeting, so they can begin drafting a final report by the end of June

Matt adjourned the meeting at 8:40pm.

Upcoming Work Group Meetings:

Tuesday, June 9, 6:30pm, County Executive's conference room

Tuesday, June 23, 6:30pm, County Executive's conference room